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## On-going Public Engagement at the Zoo: The Durrell Wildlife Park Public Participation Follow-Up Meeting

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engaging the public in nature conservation



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## Forward

The Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust is an international conservation charity with the mission of *saving species from extinction*. Since its establishment in 1959 Durrell has saved numerous species from the brink of extinction and has restored the habitats on which they depend. We now run more than 50 conservation projects in 14 countries. This direct conservation work is complemented by a well-established training programme which, to date has trained more than 3000 conservationists from 128 countries. The third pillar of our conservation efforts is represented by our wildlife park at our headquarters in Jersey. Through captive breeding and applied research the park supports our programmes in the field. The park also plays a role in providing a shop window into our conservation work worldwide to a visiting public.

As a conservation organisation, Durrell seeks to engage visitors to the wildlife park with our work and inspire them to consider how they could change the world for the better. Up to this point we have probably adopted a similar approach to other zoos in trying to achieve this ideal by *telling* the visiting public what *we* think *they* should hear, in the way *we* think they should hear it, in order to *make them* change. Such a one-way process is unlikely to ‘engage’ or ‘inspire’ people to make a difference in wildlife conservation. Rather we need to open up our thinking to inviting publics into more of a two-way dialogue about how best we can engage and involve visitors on terms that make sense to them.

The Public Participation Meeting, held at the wildlife park in Jersey in October 2010, heralded a fundamental change for Durrell in how we engage and inspire our diverse public(s). The meeting provided us with an opportunity to bring together a cross-section of our visiting public to ask them what *they* think are the most important messages to be conveyed and how *they* think visitors should be engaged. By empowering this group to participate directly in decisions over the content, medium and location of Durrell Wildlife Park’s engagement and communication activities and materials, we have been able to gain valuable insights into what different sections of the public are looking for and how best to engage them.

This report highlights our commitment to on-going public engagement with our visitors, as we ask them to point us in the directions that would be most useful and effective. As the title of this report signals, this is but one more step in what will be a continually developing journey to better understand our visiting public and ensure that together we are making the best impact possible for the benefit of wildlife conservation.

With more than 180,000 people passing through our gates each year we have a substantial opportunity to engage publics with the wildlife conservation. Globally more than a tenth of the world’s population passes through zoos annually. Zoos therefore have a significant role to play in engaging and inspiring people to care for the world into which we have been born. The public participation meeting on which this report is based takes an important step towards changing the way we engage our public with this vital issue.

Jamieson A. Copsey  
Head, International Training Centre  
Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust

## **On-going Public Engagement at the Zoo: The Durrell Wildlife Park Public Participation Follow-Up Meeting**

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### **Key Findings – Phase 1 and 2 Demonstration Project Follow-Up Feedback**

#### **Phase 1 Demonstration Project Feedback**

- 
- Participants indicated that continuing to improve information about new animals on exhibit would increase interest in the Reptile and Amphibian House. In particular, advertising new animal acquisitions in the Reptile and Amphibian House was one suggestion provided by participants to address the current issue of lack of awareness and/or interest in this part of the wildlife park.
- The provision of clear directions guiding visitors from the main Reptile and Amphibian House over to the tortoise enclosure was identified as a ‘must’ for the Demonstration Project Phase 2 developments in this zone of the wildlife park.
- Members of the original PPM group expressed positive feedback about the new visual materials in the Reptile and Amphibian House. In particular, the video screens were identified as enabling a more immersive and engaged experience.
- Despite satisfaction with the visuals presented on the videos, some participants thought the video screens could benefit from better placement within the space.
- The PPM Group also noticed significant improvements in signage at the Reptile and Amphibian House.
- While participants praised improved visual materials in the Reptile and Amphibian House, they discussed possible aural improvements needed in the site. As in the original PPM focus group, sound was once again identified as a significant factor in providing a more immersive experience of ‘being in a jungle or rainforest’, which was lacking in the Reptile and Amphibian House.
- Both strengths and weaknesses in existing content were identified, with a particular need to address the potentially problematic invasive species messaging in the Reptile and Amphibian House.

#### **Phase 2 Demonstration Project Feedback – Reptile and Amphibian House**

- Participants noted that making available *free* content on the Web is a strategy that could both increase awareness about the wildlife park amongst the general public and enhance the experience of regular visitors. Participants suggested that these online spaces could also be used to announce upcoming events and new animal acquisitions.
- in order to appeal to the full visiting public, Durrell Wildlife Park will have to maintain non-technological approaches to engaging its visitors, even as it develops new technological means for extending its audience impact in space and time.



- there was widespread support for developing the Tortoise Talks aspect of the Demonstration Project Phase 2 plans.
- Participants positively received the plans to install more natural vegetation into the animal enclosures and adjoining visitor viewing spaces. There were also practical suggestions for achieving this end with less cost by linking up with garden centres or the local orchid centre to provide exotic flora for display in the wildlife park.
- Regarding the possible introduction of life-size 3D animal models, participants were realistic about the financial constraints on the Demonstration Project Phase 2 plans, and indicated that full-scale 3D animal models, while desirable perhaps, should not be a priority at this time.
- Participants' reception of implementation plans for allowing visitors to see the animal food preparation area was lukewarm. Thus, despite some initial enthusiasm for this notion in the original PPM, the follow-up focus groups both emphasised suggestions for showcasing behind-the-scenes operations via video installations instead.

### **Phase 2 Demonstration Project Feedback – Overall Visit Experience**

- Both the PPM Group and New Visitors Group stressed the value of providing maps to visitors and increasing the overall directional guidance and the number of permanent maps provided throughout the park.
- Participants felt navigational guidance was essential to the visit experience and that it was not realistic to expect visitors to pay extra to purchase their own map.
- There was widespread support for the idea that visitor comfort needed to be enhanced in various ways (including shelter from rain, resting points and disabled/elderly access issues) as a priority for Durrell Wildlife Park.
- Participants in the New Visitors Group were highly enthusiastic about the plans to include more child-friendly attractions and activities in the wildlife park. Participants offered a number of creative ideas for making the wildlife park more 'child friendly'.
- Participants identified a great deal of potential for expanding the involvement of volunteers in Durrell Wildlife Park's engagement and educational activities. However, the recruitment, training and use of these volunteers requires careful thought and considered development to ensure high retention of volunteers and satisfaction, as well as their effectiveness in roles around the wildlife park.
- Plans for providing handheld audio guides as well as site-specific (fixed post) audio messaging were received very positively. Participants stressed the need to provide a variety of audio guide options and aural experiences for visitors.
- Participants noted that providing guides in different languages would be necessary to cater to visitors of different nationalities. Also, they mentioned that the length of recorded messages should be short in order to facilitate smooth movement in the different areas.

## Background

This report describes findings from concurrent focus groups, which were designed to follow on from the Durrell Wildlife Park Public Participation Meeting (PPM) in October 2011. This follow-up meeting and the preceding PPM is part of the larger European Commission-funded project *EU-Zoos-XXI*, which saw other PPMs taking place at zoos across Europe in Portugal, Sweden and Rome. The aim of these PPMs was to engage with members of the zoo visiting public and understand the kinds of educational and engagement needs they would like to see addressed by zoos. This unique approach involves engaging publics upstream and on an on-going basis in the decision-making process, and empowering them to guide the development of the zoo's educational provision.

Following on from an October 2010 'Public Participation Meeting' (PPM) in which members of the zoo-visiting public at Durrell Wildlife Park were invited to contribute their views on the zoo visiting experience and educational provision, a follow-up focus group event was held in May 2011. The original PPM report established the main findings and suggested developments for the wildlife park<sup>1</sup>, which defined the basis of a 'Demonstration Project' that would be delivered at Durrell Wildlife Park in line with public views expressed at the PPM. Durrell staff began to implement changes within the Reptile and Amphibian House (the zone selected for special attention in the PPM) in the interim time period between October 2010 and May 2011. These interim changes are referred to in this report as 'Demonstration Project Phase 1'. At the same time, plans were drawn up on the basis of the PPM results for more ambitious developments at the Reptile and Amphibian House as well as the broader wildlife park. These planned changes are referred to in this report as 'Demonstration Project Phase 2'.

Not everything identified for development in Demonstration Project Phase 2 could be implemented right away due to resource constraints, therefore a second follow-up public participation meeting was held in May 2011 to get public views on the priority developments and the feedback on the details of planned changes. Having established the logistical issues involved in putting PPM participants' suggestions and ideas into action, the follow-up focus groups provided further feedback on the elements already taken forward and on future plans. The results of the follow-up focus groups informed the final decision-making about which of the many suggested developments were prioritised for immediate action, and how these developments were implemented.



<sup>1</sup>[http://warwick.academia.edu/EricJensen/Papers/532229/Upstream Public Engagement at the Zoo The Durrell Wildlife Park Public Participation Meeting](http://warwick.academia.edu/EricJensen/Papers/532229/Upstream_Public_Engagement_at_the_Zoo_The_Durrell_Wildlife_Park_Public_Participation_Meeting)

## Methods

The data analysed for this report are from two separate focus groups. One focus group was moderated by Jamie Copsey (Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust), who is the head of education at Durrell. This one was comprised entirely of individuals who had been part of the original Public Participation Meeting in October 2010. The other focus group was moderated by Dr Eric Jensen (University of Warwick). This focus group was entirely comprised of individuals who had not previously been part of this process and thus were able to provide a fresh perspective<sup>2</sup>.

The focus groups took place concurrently but in three parts, with the first two focusing especially on the Reptile and Amphibian area as this area is the main focus of what was recommended to be changed from the PPM. Part 1 focus group discussion focused on feedback on the Reptile and Amphibian area information panels that had already been put in place, (Part 2) the planned future changes to the Reptile and Amphibian area that were recommended in the original PPM and (Part 3) the planned changes to the overall experience of visiting Durrell Wildlife Park to try to make it better for visitors finding their way around the site, audio guides, etc.

### Data Collection

The Public Participation Follow-Up Meeting was comprised of two focus groups, which were facilitated by Dr Eric Jensen (University of Warwick) and Jamie Copsey (Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust). The overall management and organisation of the event was run by Dr Eric Jensen and Jamie Copsey.

The selection of a focus group approach was based on the need to gather a range of views through discussion to inform the selection and content of the Durrell Demonstration Project. Sociologist Erving Goffman (1961) explicated the methodology of focus groups under the synonym 'focused gatherings', defining them in terms of their "single cognitive focus of attention; a mutual and preferential openness to verbal communication...an eye-to-eye ecological huddle" (Goffman 1961: 18). Kitzinger and Barbour (1999, pp. 4-5) extend this definition:

Focus groups are group discussions exploring a specific set of issues. The group is 'focused' in that it involves some kind of collective activity - such as [...] debating a set of questions. Crucially, focus groups are distinguished from the broader category of group interviews by the explicit use of interaction to generate data. Instead of asking questions of each person in turn, focus group researchers encourage participants to talk to one another: asking questions, exchanging anecdotes, and commenting on each others' experiences and points of view.

Thus, if the structure and purpose of focus groups are carefully designed, they have the potential to facilitate analysis of the similarity and diversity of opinions on a particular issue from a variety of research participants (Kitzinger, 1994). Indeed, they were selected as the research method for the initial study because they allow a number of participants to discuss a particular issue – their perspectives on zoo-based public engagement with wildlife

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<sup>2</sup> A distinctive aspect of this latter focus group was to draw out their views on similar topics to those identified in the original PPM in order to see if they had similar or divergent views from those in the original PPM findings. Invariably, this focus group expressed similar views on the issues identified in the original PPM, thereby giving extra weight to the representativeness of those findings.



conservation– in a supportive environment, using their own language and terminology (Holliman, 2005).

In addition to continuing to define the shape of the Durrell Demonstration Project, the PPM follow-up focus groups for this study encompassed the same three main goals as the original PPM:

- *Research*: To investigate participants' views about zoo-based public engagement in order to inform the development of more effective approaches to communicating wildlife conservation messages.
- *Action (Demonstration Project)*: To identify the functionality and types of zoo-based informational resources and engagement that participants prioritise for development.
- *Public Engagement Methodology*: To assess the usefulness of conducting on-going upstream public engagement to inform the development of new approaches and messages for engaging visitors with wildlife conservation.

The findings from this phase of the project directly inform the subsequent structure, content and delivery methods to be used in Phase 2 of the Durrell Wildlife Park's Demonstration Project as it is rolled out throughout the second half of 2011.

The PPM follow-up focus groups were digitally recorded and fully transcribed for analysis. Once collected the data were coded following an inductive or 'grounded' thematic analysis approach.

**Figure 1: Durrell PPM Follow-Up Focus Group in Progress**



### **Data Analysis**

An analysis of the original PPM focus group transcripts identified an array of specific recommended engagement activities and materials that Durrell Wildlife Park could undertake. These ideas were taken forward by practitioners at Durrell to identify how they could be implemented and then these implementation ideas were put before follow-up focus group participants for further advice and feedback.

The in-depth qualitative data collected during these follow-up focus groups were also rigorously analysed to identify patterns and themes (for full discussion of data analysis methods used, see Jensen & Holliman 2009)

Qualitative results extracts from the focus groups are appended with a respondent's: gender and a number to distinguish individuals (e.g. F3 means 'Female Participant Number 3'), as well as the number designation of the focus group.



## Results

This section brings together data from two separate focus groups conducted in May 2011. One focus group consists of participants from the first October 2010 'Public Participation Meeting' (PPM). The 'PPM Group' weighs in on new developments at the Durrell Wildlife Park since their October 2010 visit. Most of the discussion here involves comparisons being drawn between their first and second visits and the kinds of 'improvements' that they have seen—and still hope to see—in the wildlife park.

Participants of the second focus group are zoo visitors who were not part of the initial PPM and thus provided a fresh perspective to this on-going public engagement project. Feedback from this group, labelled below as '*New Visitors Group*', showed an interesting pattern of identifying similar issues as the first PPM from October 2010 without any prompting in this direction.

The discussion begins with visitor feedback about the Reptile and Amphibian House and the Phase 1 Demonstration Project changes to this zone of the wildlife park, which was identified as the key area in need of improvement in the first PPM. The second main section identifies participants' responses to the planned improvements to be implemented in the Reptile and Amphibian House. The final section presents general feedback about the overall wildlife park visiting experience.

### Part 1: The Reptile and Amphibian House and Phase 1 Demonstration Project Changes

The Reptile and Amphibian House was identified in the first PPM as requiring significant improvements in attracting visitors, enhancing visitor experience, and effectively communicating educational messages (i.e., animal conservation) to visitors. Changes that had already been implemented in Demonstration Project Phase 1 included new video screens with messages and footage of Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust staff working with animals, as well as some new information labels and posters. While the PPM Group noted these additions represented a positive change in line with what they had called for in the original PPM in October 2010, they and the New Visitors Group nevertheless identified points for improvement and provided some specific suggestions.

#### *Attracting Visitors*

Participants indicated that continuing to improve information about new animals on exhibit would increase interest in the Reptile and Amphibian House. In particular, advertising new animal acquisitions in the Reptile and Amphibian House was one suggestion provided by participants to address the current issue of lack of awareness and/or interest in this part of the wildlife park. They argued that frequent visitors to Durrell Wildlife Park would most likely benefit from this strategy, as this group of visitors are typically primarily motivated by a desire to 'see the new thing'.

- NC Well, I guess we come here to see the animals. I'm not too sure we come here to learn about them.
- PC We just make a visit to see the new thing.
- F1 Exactly, what's new, what's happening [...] That's what you want to come to see.

New Visitors Group (Phase 1 Interview)

Participants also cited how a film running in the Princess Royal Pavilion area could create awareness for the Reptile House.

- F2 If you showed something in this [Princess Pavilion] area you're actually walking past to get the Reptile House as you've arrived at the zoo. So if there were the right signage, people would make their way in. You could have it on a loop or perhaps have specific times when you're actually going to show it, sort of on the hour or something.

PPM Group (Phase 1 Interview)

Both the New Visitors Group and PPM Group also cited a need to improve the integration of the Reptile and Amphibian House with its adjoining outside area (which included the tortoise exhibit). For instance, upon exiting the Reptile and Amphibian House, some visitors recalled feeling disoriented and requiring directions as to where to go next. The tortoise exhibit was specifically cited as something that visitors easily missed, thus suggesting that better path-planning was required in relation to the main Reptile and Amphibian area.

- Mod What do you think about the connection between the inside of the Reptile and Amphibian House and the outside area? How many of you would naturally wander around that way?

- F2 The side area? Yes, I would have missed that, to be honest. I wouldn't have gone up that path [towards the tortoises] unless you directed me and said there was another area [to see]. So you do need to point people that way, because I would have missed all those [informational] posters on the side and [missed seeing] the rest of the reptiles.

PPM Group (Phase 1 Interview)

This issue of connecting the main Reptile and Amphibian House with the adjoining outside space was also highlighted by the New Visitors Group.

- NC When we came out, we didn't even go to the tortoises because we didn't even know the tortoises were there.

- UF1 No, I didn't know.

- NC I didn't see [the big signs] because when you come out there, [the] big signs are behind you on the wall.

- UF2 I didn't know those tortoises were around there, and I help [in the Zoo] three days a week.

...

- Mod [... is there] one thing that you think [that] is most problematic or most important to change?

- OC The reptile house and the tortoise area connection.

- UF1 Yes, there's not enough direction. As you come out of the [main Reptile and Amphibian House], you're immediately heading off [away from the tortoises...].

New Visitors Group (Phase 1 Interview)



Thus, the provision of clear directions guiding visitors from the main Reptile and Amphibian House over to the tortoise enclosure was identified as a 'must' for the Demonstration Project Phase 2 developments in this zone of the wildlife park.

### *Enhancing Visitor Experience*

The original PPM meeting in October 2010 e numerous recommendations about enhancing the 'multi-sensory experience' of visiting the wildlife park. This included proposals for video screens, improved signage, and piped-in audio to convey an authentic wildlife atmosphere for visitors, which it was thought could increase interest and immersion for visiting children especially.

Members of the original PPM group expressed positive feedback about the new visual materials in the Reptile and Amphibian House. In particular, the video screens were identified as enabling a more immersive and engaged experience. In particular, they effectively provided up-close perspectives on animal activities that are not normally visible to the visiting public.

- M2 The addition of the videos, I think, is very strong. I actually noticed the [animal] feeding on the video[...]. I was standing in front of one of the cages this time where you still couldn't see very much, and the video made a huge difference [...] and I actually leaped back when the snake ate something!

PPM Group (Phase 1 Interview)

However, despite satisfaction with the visuals presented on the videos, some participants thought the video screens could benefit from better placement within the space. For instance, some participants mentioned noticing only one of the two new screens during their walk around the main Reptile and Amphibian House, while others had difficulty watching one of the videos because of the angle at which the screen is currently installed. This point came up in both focus groups:

- F2 The two videos help in the sense that you can... actually look at the screens. But, as we said, with the screen up there, we didn't even notice it was there.

New Visitors Group (Phase 1 Interview)

- F1 I found the [placement of the big screen] was quite high. You've got seats there, but perhaps if they could be put at an angle so people could actually sit and watch it. Especially elderly people—they might find it difficult to stand with their head back for any length of time to actually watch the video that's showing.

PPM Group (Phase 1 Interview)

Among the PPM Group participants, there was a debate over whether the location of the large video screen helped or hindered the smooth passage of visitors through the Reptile and Amphibian House. (The current location of the smaller screen was agreed to be effective)

- F2 I thought [the large video screen] should have been put either at the end or at the beginning [...]. I found it a bit of a distraction in the middle when you were going around the cages to have to stop and watch it... If you were stopping to watch the video, other people were coming around you and having to move around... But the little video [screen] is definitely in the right place.

PPM Group (Phase 1 Interview)

One possible solution that was discussed was providing more benches where people could comfortably watch the videos for a greater length of time.

- F1 If you could just have another bench at another angle for older people who perhaps might find it difficult [otherwise].

PPM Group (Phase 1 Interview)

The PPM Group also noticed significant improvements in signage at the Reptile and Amphibian House. Most participants agreed that Durrell education staff had not put in excessive signage in the area, and had in fact provided sufficient information about the animals while maintaining the ‘main attraction’ status of the live animals.

- M2 I am quite impressed about the actions that have been taken from what I remembered... I think there was a danger of over-signage then, you go from one to the other, and I’m pleased about the balance. I [also] thought that you weren’t dumbing down... I think the point about space is well made because you can end up [with] too much.
- M1 I also think they’ve got the balance right.
- F2 I like the pictures on the outside before you get in: they’re very good and they’re bright and they pointed. And the new posters inside [were] informative, not too much. They also tell you what to look for, and I think they’re very good.

PPM Group (Phase 1 Interview)

Aside from praising the correct ‘balance’ between park signage and animal showcasing, participants positively remarked on the locations and positioning of the signage.

- F1 I think the signage was much better positioned than it was last time we came; it’s noticeably on the side of the glass so that it’s not [blocking] your view of the animals inside.
- Mod Does it work on the glass or are you left thinking that they’ve taken away a bit of my viewing area?
- F1 I thought it worked actually this time.
- M1 I thought it worked.

PPM Group (Phase 1 Interview)

While participants praised the improved visual materials in the Reptile and Amphibian House, they discussed possible aural improvements in the site. As in the original PPM focus group, sound was once again identified as a significant factor in providing a more immersive experience of ‘being in a jungle or rainforest’, which was lacking in the Reptile and Amphibian House.

- F3 I would have expected there to be more sound... If you go into a rainforest, you’re bombarded by the senses. All your senses are just buzzing, and you don’t get that feeling going on [...]. There is some sound, but it’s very muted.
- F1 [Sound] makes you more curious as well to look for things. “Ooh, what’s that?”

New Visitors Group (Phase 1 Interview)

### *Communicating Messages*

Both focus groups included short but insightful discussions about the actual educational content in the signage and video materials. Overall, the participants were positive about the content of texts and videos, expressing that a correct balance was obtained in educating and entertaining site visitors.

In particular, one of the video's focus on Durrell's conservation efforts on Jersey relating to the Agile Frog video was praised.

- F2 The [video] about the Jersey Agile Frog... definitely links in Jersey with the rest of the world; the same species affects all of us. Generally, [the site] is a lot, lot brighter, with more information. And it's more friendly for adults and children hopefully.

#### PPM Group (Phase 1 Interview)

On the other hand, the longstanding signage about the invasive Australian Cane Toad species exhibited in the Reptile and Amphibian House (which was still up after the Phase 1 Demonstration Project) was criticised.

- PC The [signage about the Cane Toad] was a bit of a disaster. The information on that, I thought [seems to be] saying, "you know, get rid of the toads, terrible pest". And "that's an Australian problem, it's not a Jersey problem".

...

- F3 It doesn't tell the whole story.

- PC They should [better convey the message] about when animals are introduced in the wrong place... That meaning doesn't come through there, only that toads are bad, which is not right.

#### New Visitors Group (Phase 1 Interview)

Therefore, both strengths and weaknesses in existing content were identified, with a particular need to address the potentially problematic invasive species messaging in the Reptile and Amphibian House.

## **Part 2: Feedback on Demonstration Project Phase 2 Plans - Reptile & Amphibian House**

Both focus groups included a component in which visitors were consulted about proposed plans for improving the Reptile and Amphibian House. This section identifies the most salient points from the focus group discussion about the Demonstration Project Phase 2 plans for the Reptile and Amphibian House.

### *Online Presence*

Demonstration Project Phase 2 improvement plans include an increased online presence for the wildlife park through podcasts and micro-sites that provide background information about animals and exhibits. Both the PPM Group and New Visitors Group generally received this idea quite positively. They posited that these materials would be most useful for students going on educational trips and individuals highly interested in wildlife. They did note however

that interest in these online materials among the general public (and older people) would most likely be minimal.

- F2 The podcast [...] I'm not that literate in that. Would people use it?
- NC Yes, I think the kids might use it [...] Particularly, if they knew it was available and that they could do it before they came to the zoo.
- F1 For school groups, it would be really useful.

#### New Visitors Group (Phase 2 Interview)

The PPM Group discussion highlighted the potentially wide audience for these web-based engagement materials.

- MS1 I think there are two aspects to this web thing. Not just you've been here and visited and want to go to it. You might [also] attract people who are coming to Jersey and who would go into the website before they came. And that could be a useful inducement.

#### PPM Group (Phase 2 Interview)

Participants noted that making available *free* content on the Web is a strategy that could both increase awareness about the wildlife park amongst the general public and enhance the experience of regular visitors. Participants suggested that these online spaces could also be used to announce upcoming events and new animal acquisitions.

#### *Flyers/Printed Material*

It is important to note that both groups identified that older people specifically are unlikely to access online material. As such, respondents discussed the alternative of making available printed educational materials that would be more useful for the wildlife park's older visitors.

- MOD These guys are saying they would go into websites. Would any of you?
- SL No.
- MS2 [It's a] generational thing. [Younger] people just don't use paper, and we do.
- NDM I like it in front of me, but then, as you said, that's a generation thing.

#### New Visitors Group (Phase 2 Interview)

Therefore, in order to appeal to the full visiting public, Durrell Wildlife Park will have to maintain non-technological approaches to engaging its visitors, even as it develops new technological means for extending its audience impact in space and time.

#### *Tortoise Talks and Area Improvement*

As mentioned above, the tortoise area was identified by follow-up focus group participants as most in need of improvement. The proposals for tortoise talks and area renovation were thus very positively received. Participants shared suggestions to improve path-planning in the tortoise area and proposed the construction of an outdoor amphitheatre.

- CH1 I like the tortoise talks where all the plants are growing. You could clean it up and maybe do the tortoise talks at that end, have people stroke the tortoise on the head and feed them. That would be nice to interact with them.



## New Visitors Group (Phase 2 Interview)

- F1 [What is most] essential [is] putting a window in the back of the tortoise house.
- F2 You need a big sculpture to [attract] kids to come over[...]. Or just footprints...
- F1 Just drawing of footprints on the floor. [...]
- F3 Because we said you can't get around to the tortoises. [...]
- F3 A little amphitheatre would be good outdoors. Even now, we could be sitting out there if there were a little amphitheatre.

## PPM Group (Phase 2 Interview)

Indeed, there was widespread support for developing the Tortoise Talks aspect of the Demonstration Project Phase 2 plans.

*Natural Vegetation*

Participants positively received the plans to install more natural vegetation into the animal enclosures and adjoining visitor viewing spaces.

- CH1 [Making enclosures more natural would be] quite good as well.

## New Visitors Group (Phase 2 Interview)

There were also practical suggestions for achieving this end with less cost by linking up with garden centres or the local orchid centre to provide exotic flora for display in the wildlife park.

- F2 What about the garden centres? Are you going to speak to them? They've got indoor plants, tropical plants... Say, "Would you like to display some of your plants?"

## PPM Group (Phase 2 Interview)

Participants argued that Durrell developing such links to local plant suppliers could be mutually beneficial.

*Life-size Animal Models*

The proposal to install life-size animal models which was put forward in the original PPM and discussed again in this meeting was well received, though not with the most enthusiastic of responses. Participants quickly cautioned against taking attention away from the 'main attraction' status of the live animals.

- CH1 It might be good for children... If you don't have a chance to see [up-close] the real animals, then it gives you [an idea] how big the animal [really] is.

...

- MS2 I don't think you should be putting life-size models inside where the creatures are[...]. I just think that the danger of these things is that you can throw everything at [visitors], [but] you have to keep to your themes... the range of interaction and the conservation story [...].

New Visitors Group (Phase 2 Interview)

Among the list of proposals, participants did not think that life-size models should be a high-priority.

- EJ What about this idea of having a more durable [life-size model] outside that was near the entrance?
- F2 Well, it's similar to what you were saying: a big sign or something. A big lizard or reptile.
- F1 Not on a board itself, but just the actual shape of a lizard and brightly colored.
- EJ Okay. As part of a sign rather than as a 3D model?
- F1 Yes.
- F3 A 3D one would cost you a fortune, wouldn't it? To be durable.
- EJ Yes, it would be expensive.
- F3 Maybe [for the] long-term. Because they've got two or three nice sculptures now.

PPM Group (Phase 2 Interview)

As can be seen in the discussion above, participants were realistic about the financial constraints on the Demonstration Project Phase 2 plans, and indicated that full-scale 3D animal models, while desirable perhaps, should not be a priority at this time.

*Viewing the Feeding Preparation Area / Behind-the-Scenes*

Participants' reception of implementation plans for allowing visitors to see the animal food preparation area was lukewarm. The plan involved adding a viewing window into the existing door. Participants had difficulty envisioning this set-up, and how attractive it would be for visitors. Thus, despite some initial enthusiasm for this notion in the original PPM, the follow-up focus groups both emphasised suggestions for showcasing behind-the-scenes operations via video installations instead.

- F2 I'm not sure how valuable that is [the viewing window in the door] actually... It depends what you can see.
- NC And only if there's something worth seeing.
- F2 And whether they want to be seen.
- NC Why can't [showing the kitchens or breeding programme] be shown electronically then? With a webcam linked in to the screen?
- EJ That was the alternative we've discussed. So do you think that would be better?
- F1 That's much better, yes.

PPM Group (Phase 2 Interview)

The alternative of providing video footage of the animal feeding preparations was seen as better for ensuring a good experience for visitors, regardless of the time of day they happened to be visiting.

NDM Then would you have a stable door there so that the top half perhaps could be opened so people can look straight, or do you have to have a glass door?... If the staff wanted a bit of privacy to prepare something they could just shut the top rather than leave it open all the time.

...

CH2 If you do have the door there, and if the visitors see, like, fruit and food, how are they supposed to know...?

MOD That's a very good question. So [visitors may] just be left with more questions by seeing through into the back area, particularly if there's nobody there.

#### New Visitors Group (Phase 2 Interview)

Therefore, in order to maintain a good visit experience, the idea of physically implementing the idea of giving visitors a window on the food preparation area has been set aside in favour of an alternative approach using video footage.

### Part 3: Feedback on Demonstration Project Phase 2 Plans for Overall Visit Experience

This section draws from Phase 3 of the focus group interviews, where participants were consulted about their overall experience in the wildlife park. Topics here ranged from: pathway improvements to aid navigation around the park, improvements to visitor comfort, enhancing child-friendly attractions, volunteer engagement and the details of implementing the original PPM idea of installing audio guides at the wildlife park.

#### *Pathway and Guidance Improvements*

Effective signage once again became an important point of discussion when participants were consulted about their experience of walking around the entire wildlife park. Here, there is a noticeable difference in opinion between the New Visitors and PPM Groups. The former significantly stressed their experiences of getting lost and anxious feelings of 'missing something important'. In contrast, the latter resisted suggestions of providing 'recommended routes' through the park, reiterating discovery, mystery, and adventure as consistent with the zoo experience.

M1 It is a complicated area. I've been coming here for years. I still get lost.

F1 I think there's always the feeling that you've missed something really important... If you had a recommended route, [visitors would] feel that, "Right, I've done that bit, and I've done that bit. Oh, I've missed out on that bit, like the tortoise area that could be easily missed."

#### New Visitors Group (Phase 2 Visit Experience Interview)

Thus, the idea of implementing a recommended route was welcomed by the New Visitors Group. Amongst the participants from the original PPM however there was concern about crowding as a result of a recommended route and from a wildlife park member there was even a positive view expressed about getting lost in the wildlife park.

- MOD The idea of having a recommended route through the park was one of the things that came up-
- M1 I don't think that's a good idea. I think one of the beauties of this site is that it's so random. And if you start having people going the same way all the time, it gets a bit-
- F1 crowded.
- F2 The fact of maybe getting a bit lost is that you find something you didn't know was there.

PPM Group (Phase 2 Visit Experience Interview)

Nevertheless, both the PPM Group and New Visitors Group stressed the value of providing maps to visitors and increasing the overall directional guidance and the number of permanent maps provided throughout the park.

- M1 If you've got a signpost, I would have thought, particularly the signposts with more signs on... At those strategic points, I would have thought a map would be useful... You need maps around the place because people aren't going to buy them.
- F1 It's just that you need more signs to tell you where things are and how to get [there].

PPM Group (Phase 2 Visit Experience Interview)

Participants felt such navigational guidance was essential to the visit experience and that it was not realistic to expect visitors to pay extra to purchase their own map.

Interestingly, the New Visitors Group again raised a range of ideas for making navigation around the site simpler.

- F2 When I was here last [year], there was a lot of signposts and the map showing where everything was, which was helpful to have something at the start when you first come through the entrance. But I rather like the idea of direction signage, with perhaps signs painted on the ground.
- MOD To enable you to not only know where you are currently but to help you make the choice what to go and see...?
- F2 Yes, because rather than having to look for the signpost, you've got something on the ground to follow.

New Visitors Group (Phase 2 Visit Experience Interview)

Both in the PPM Group and the New Visitors Group there was significant interest in enhancing and expanding directional signage around the wildlife park. Resistance from some longstanding members of the wildlife trust may represent the perspective of those who will visit the site many times over a number of years, while other participants took the perspective of first time or less frequent visitors who would want to get the most out of their visits. Clearly the way forward in this domain is to substantially enhance directional signage while seeking to keep this signage as tasteful and targeted as possible so that longstanding wildlife trust



members do not feel their experience is being negatively impacted. Ultimately however, the wildlife park will have to decide which of these audience needs is the highest priority.

### *Improving Visitor Comfort*

Several suggestions for improving visitor comfort at the wildlife park were discussed. Participants highlighted the need to provide (or at least sell) rainy weather accessories, to increase seating areas throughout the park, and to include ramp pathways (as alternative to stairs) for the elderly and the less-abled. They mentioned that, while these improvements may be costly, the wildlife park could also explore sponsorships from private companies and donors to fund these essential improvements.

Shelter from the rain was one aspect of visitor comfort that was discussed.

MOD What are your thoughts on that issue of providing shelter from the rain?

C1 I don't like umbrellas because they cover most of your head but not the whole body. If you wear a poncho, then it covers most of your body.

M1 I know somewhere where the umbrellas and ponchos were just sponsored by a company with their name on it.

#### New Visitors Group (Phase 2 Visit Experience Interview)

Another aspect of visitor comfort that was discussed was the provision of places for people to rest over the course of their visit to the wildlife park.

MOD So you think that the point about [providing] more rest points, that's an important one?

F1 Yes

[General Agreement]

M1 Because a lot of people come for the day, don't they? And you don't want to be standing around all day. I know you can go in the café and sit down, but you don't want to pay for something. [...]

MOD So the more detailed question underneath that is where the priority should be in terms of placement of these rest points.

M1 I don't think there is any limitation on the number [of rest points]. You need places for people to sit down because there's a lot of people coming in here.

[General Agreement]

F2 Oh yes, you need them everywhere. And the beauty of providing benches is you can move them about-

F3 I have never ever seen anyone sitting in the [benches by] the gorilla enclosure. [So these benches could be moved]

#### PPM Group (Phase 2 Visit Experience Interview)

The New Visitors Group broadened the discussion beyond providing benches to include the general access issues around the site for elderly and disabled people.

- C2 [For the aviary], there is quite a lot of steps there. You could have a little ramp for disabled people...
- C1 Or for the people who are elderly and don't like steps really.
- C2 You can just go up the ramp... more easily.

New Visitors Group (Phase 2 Visit Experience Interview)

As can be seen in the extracts above, there was widespread support for the idea that visitor comfort needed to be enhanced in various ways (including shelter from rain, resting points and disabled/elderly access issues) as a priority for Durrell Wildlife Park.

*Child-Friendly Attractions*

Participants in the New Visitors Group were highly enthusiastic about the plans to include more child-friendly attractions and activities in the wildlife park. Participants offered a number of creative ideas for making the wildlife park more 'child friendly'.

- C1 If there is like a bench [or table] that you can have lunch...
- C2 Like one of those tables that also have a chessboard...
- C1 And one that can have snakes and ladders or anything really to keep us amused.
- F2 How about a giant [snakes and ladders or chess area]? Set out in the grass and you can have giant pieces.
- C1 Yes, like the animals as the chess pieces would be good.
- ...
- F1 Costumes for the children... I think they like that sort of thing.

New Visitors Group (Phase 2 Visit Experience Interview)

Given that children are a key demographic for the park, recommendations for activity areas, activity packs, and animal costumes were seen as meriting consideration. Indeed, these ideas being implemented as part of the Demonstration Project Phase 2.

*Volunteer Engagement*

As a wildlife park that opens its doors to the general public, Durrell was recognized by participants as requiring the support of the wider community in Jersey. Volunteers were identified as potentially enhancing the visitor experience by expanding the wildlife park's capacity to deliver live tours, educate visitors and field their questions, as well as contributing to overall operations. There is a strong sense that people in Jersey may be motivated to 'give back' to their community by volunteering at Durrell, provided that information about volunteering opportunities is disseminated effectively and proper incentives given.

- M1 They [have a volunteer program] in American museums and art galleries. They're all volunteers, they're all trained, and they're all uniformed. They're very keen and very helpful.
- ...

- F2 Durrell is a charity, and charities do need to rely on volunteers to some extent. The Art Centre has a wonderful set of volunteers, speaking as one. Durrell also has, and has always had, a good band of volunteers[...]. There are people in Jersey who will do it. And I still say that Durrell is the best thing that ever happened to Jersey, and we're very lucky that it's still going strong after 50 odd years.

New Visitors Group (Phase 2 Visit Experience Interview)

The focus group participants also cited the need for strategic recruitment of volunteers, after stressing that they would prefer park volunteers who would be well-trained and educated.

- F2 If you got people that were wanting to get into education [professionally], then that's a target for [potential volunteers who could] stand there and tell people about things around the park. Because that's what they're going to have to do if they teach classes. [...]
- F3 Because there are a lot of young people, between 16 and 20, that are wanting to do more varied programmes to help them get a broader spectrum of experience for their CV, going into work or to university.
- MOD So maybe, in terms of recruitment, maybe targeting sixth-form colleges?
- F3 Yes, the local 16- to 18-year old groups. [...]
- M1 Are there any educational programmes in the UK where you could get students in as part of their degree?
- F3 Internships or something?
- MOD Yes, internships are possible.
- M1 And you may be able to get it in the schools as well.

PPM Group (Phase 2 Visit Experience Interview)

Some participants also cited the need to revamp the Durrell youth programmes currently provided by the wildlife park. The key complaint is the limited range of activities that have been on offer. One participant whose children had previously been part of the program remarked that the experience was disappointing given that interaction with animals was kept at a minimum.

- F3 The youth programmes, from my children's experience, weren't developed. They were only offered certain things and they felt limited, just pushed into doing badgers [...], cleaning, helping with basic tasks.
- MOD What if they had been asked if they would be happy to spend some time in the Reptile House and talking to people?
- F3 I'm sure they would [enjoy] that, yes... Durrell runs workshops from ages six upwards and various age groups. And then there's the volunteer program, which is more developed, but that's the one that I know my daughter was involved in and she dropped out of it.
- MOD Because she wasn't being challenged enough?

F3 Yes.

PPM Group (Phase 2 Visit Experience Interview)

As can be seen above, participants identified a great deal of potential for expanding the involvement of volunteers in Durrell Wildlife Park's engagement and educational activities. However, the recruitment, training and use of these volunteers requires careful thought and considered development to ensure high retention of volunteers and satisfaction, as well as their effectiveness in roles around the wildlife park.

*Audio Guides*

As mentioned in previous sections, participants cited the wildlife park's aural engagement as needing major improvements. (Namely, the Reptile and Amphibian House was identified as lacking in ambient sound effects that could provide a more immersive experience). In addition, following on from the original PPM's clear recommendation that an audio guide system be implemented, plans were put in front of the follow-up meeting focus groups. The plans for providing handheld audio guides as well as site-specific (fixed post) audio messaging were received very positively. Participants stressed the need to provide a variety of audio guide options and aural experiences for visitors.

MOD There are many different ways that we can provide audio guides. You can have it on something that you can carry around with you. Or you can have them on fixed posts that people push a button and either listen on headphones or speaker. Do you have any thoughts?

F3 I think both. In [different museums in London], you get a variety.

F2 You do get different [options].

PPM Group (Phase 2 Visit Experience Interview)

Indeed, participants were in favour of a substantial investment in this medium of engagement, including a link to the previous suggestions about providing rest points around the site to aid visitor comfort.

F2 At some rest points, it wouldn't be a bad idea to have some audio in a static.

MOD So have a static one to complement it?

F2 So when you're resting, you could be learning.

New Visitors Group (Phase 2 Visit Experience Interview)

Participants noted that providing guides in different languages would be necessary to cater to visitors of different nationalities. Also, they mentioned that the length of recorded messages should be short in order to facilitate smooth movement in the different areas.

M2 You've got a big Portuguese and Polish community on the island, and you've got all the French visitors.

F2 And German and Dutch... You'd like to have a few of those languages.

New Visitors Group (Phase 2 Visit Experience Interview)



Within the context of widespread availability of audio messaging, participants nevertheless thought that individual audio messages should be kept relatively short.

MOD Any thoughts on how long [a recorded message] should be?

M1 I would give as little information as possible

F3 Yes, short.

MOD So 30 seconds? A minute?

F1 Yes, no more than a minute because people just wouldn't stand there. And if somebody else is waiting to have a listen as well, then it gets frustrating, doesn't it?

PPM Group (Phase 2 Visit Experience Interview)

Ultimately then, the follow-up focus groups provided clear guidance on the preferred development approach for the audio guides proposed in the original PPM. These plans are being taken forward as a priority element of the Demonstration Project Phase 2.

## Discussion and Conclusion

This report discusses the views of zoo visitors on the crucial question of how zoos can best engage publics with wildlife conservation, establishing an on-going dialogue with the aim of enhancing the value and impact of the educational and engagement activities at Durrell Wildlife Park. The conclusions reached through these focus group discussions feed directly into the Demonstration Project Phase 2.

This follow-up public participation meeting signals Durrell Wildlife Park's commitment to on-going public engagement with its visitors. To ensure that this relationship between Durrell and its public is maintained, on-going feedback, dialogue and transparency are required. The implementation of the Demonstration Project Phase 2 will set the stage for the next step in this journey.

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**Appendix 1 – Follow-Up Focus Group Guide Questions****Reptile House Demonstration Project Phase 1 Focus Group Session (Part 1)**

1. Overall, what do you think of the changes that have been made in the Reptile House so far? Improved?
2. Is there anything about Phase 1 changes you think has been particularly good / effective?
3. Anything that you think hasn't been so good or could have been better?

*Specifically:*

- What do you think of the new information signs in the Reptile House?
- Do you think they are providing useful information?
- Are there any ways you could think of to improve the signs that have gone up in Phase 1?
- Any other feedback you could offer about the Phase 1 changes in the Reptile House?

**Reptile House Demonstration Project Phase 2 Focus Group Session (Part 2)**

1. Overall, what do you think of the Phase 2 plans for the Reptile House?
2. Are there any particular plans you think are particularly good or important? (why / why not? What do others in the focus group think?)
3. Any of the plans that sound less good or not worth taking forward? (why / why not? What do others in the focus group think?)

**Broader Site Demonstration Project Phase 2 Focus Group Session (Part 3)**

1. Overall, what do you think of the Phase 2 plans for the broader wildlife park experience?
2. Are there any particular plans you think are particularly good or important? (why / why not? What do others in the focus group think?)
3. Any of the plans that sound less good or not worth taking forward? (why / why not? What do others in the focus group think?)

*Asking for specific feedback on:*

- Welcome signs inviting people into exhibit spaces (what should these say? Images?)
- Podcast (Worthwhile? Topic ideas? How to market, if it all?),
- Suggestions for recruitment of education volunteers?
- Suggestions on directional feedback?
- Suggestions on what audio guides should be like (e.g. fixed post vs. portable headphones? Content suggestions? How long? Important to have more than voice [e.g. animal sounds?])